

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claim 9 and amend claims 1-8 as indicated:

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for supplier ~~computer~~ implemented management of assembly manufacturer and component price negotiation, said method comprising the steps of:

maintaining a database listing possible suppliers for a specified assembly component;

hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers within said database utilizing a plurality of scoring parameters;

automatically selecting a limited number of possible suppliers based upon said hierarchical rankings;

issuing an invitation to a bidders conference to each of said limited number of possible suppliers;

thereafter, specifying to each of said limited number of possible suppliers an identity of all of said limited number of possible suppliers; and

negotiating a final price and selecting a designated supplier for said specified assembly component following said bidders conference.

2. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 1 wherein said step of hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers within said database using a plurality of scoring parameters includes the step of hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers based in part upon previous business experience with each possible supplier.

3. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 1 wherein said step of hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers within said database using a plurality of scoring parameters includes the step of hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers based in part upon confidence in stated pricing for each possible supplier.

4. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 1 wherein said step of hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers within said database using a plurality of scoring parameters includes the step of hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers based in part upon demonstrated manufacturing performance for each possible supplier.

5. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 1 wherein the step of automatically selecting a limited number of possible suppliers based upon said hierarchical ranking comprises the step of selecting at least a top three hierarchically ranked possible suppliers.

6. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 1 further including the step issuing a Request for Quotation (RFQ) for said specified assembly component prior to hierarchically ranking said possible suppliers within said database utilizing a plurality of scoring parameters.

7. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 6 further including the step of reissuing said Request for Quotation (RFQ) for said specified assembly component after automatically selecting a limited number of possible suppliers based upon said hierarchical rankings.

8. (currently amended) The method ~~for computer implemented management of assembly manufacturer~~ according to claim 7 further including the step validating responses received to said reissued Request for Quotation (RFQ) utilizing cost estimates.

9. (cancelled)